DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 310 701 HE 022 808

TITLE	Commuters and Residents: Longitudinal Similarities and Differences. MLS Research Highlights, Research Report 13.
INSTITUTION	Maryland Univ., College Park. Maryland Longitudinal Study Steering Committee.
PUB DATE	89
NOTE	11p.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research/Technical (143)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Academic Persistence; Black Students; *College Students; *Commuting Students; Comparative Analysis; Higher Education; Longitudinal Studies; *On Campus Students; *Student Characteristics; *Student Development
IDENTIFIERS	*University of Maryland College Park

ABSTRACT

Based on a previous report comparing commuter and resident freshmen at the University of Maryland, College Park, the analysis of the similarities and differences of commuter and resident students is extended in the students' third year of college. Dependent commuters (defined as living at home or with other relatives) were compared to students living in campus residence halls. Results included the following: (1) with the exception of one semester, no statistically significant differences were found in the re-enrollment rates of residents and commuters in either the Representative Group (all students) or the Black Group, although the return rates for residents were higher than for commuters each semester; (2) place of residence (on campus or off) appeared to be a more stable category in the Representative Group than in the Black Group; (3) when commuters and residents were compared in terms of cumulative grade point average, number of credits accumulated and hours spent studying, no significant differences were found; (4) commuters worked significantly more hours than residents; (5) residents reported more gains in personal development than did commuters; and (6) regardless of place of residence, students showed a significant amount of change over 2 years on most questions, but the initial relative differences between commuters and residents persisted. Contains 7 references. (KM)

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MLS RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

Maryland Longitudinal Study

RESEARCH REPORT #13

COMMUTERS AND RESIDENTS: LONGITUDINAL SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report builds on the **MLS Research Report #3: The freshman experience at UMCP: Comparing commuter and resident students** by extending the analysis into the students' third year of college. Dependent commuters (defined as living at home or with other relatives) were compared to other students who lived in campus residence halls. Five questions were asked.

I. Is there a relationship between residence status (on or off campus) during the freshman year and subsequent enrollment status?

With the exception of one semester, there were no statistically significant differences in the re-enrollment rates of residents and commuters in either the Representative Group or the Black Group, although the return rates for residents were higher than for commuters each semester.

II. How stable is residence status across time?

Place of residence, either on campus or off, appears to be a more stable category in the Representative Group than in the Black Group. In other words, students in the Representative Group who were either campus residents or commuters as freshmen were more likely to still be campus residents or commuters as juniors than students in the Black Group.

III. & IV. What differences occurred over time among residents and commuters in terms of academic variables, employment patterns, personal development, peer support, institutional involvement and relationships with faculty and staff?

Given the complexity of the question, the reader is referred to the report for a complete discussion. However, several highlights are as follows:

When commuters and residents were compared in terms of cumulative GPA's, number of credits accumulated and hours spent studying, no significant differences were found. Commuter students did work significantly more hours than campus residents. Campus residents also reported more gains in personal development than did commuters.

V. Did commuters and residents change over time (in terms of the dimensions outlined above)?

In general, students, regardless of place of residence, showed a significant amount of change over the two-year period on the majority of questions studied in this report. These findings were consistent across the Black and Representative Groups. However, since residents and commuters generally started out at different points (freshman residents were frequently higher), the initial relative differences between commuters and campus residents persisted.

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Maryland Longitudinal Study Steering Committee
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The Maryland Longitudinal Study (MLS) is a research undertaking of the Division of Student Affairs at The University of Maryland College Park. A significant number of Student Affairs staff have been involved in the study since its inception. A Steering Committee appointed by the Vice President for Student Affairs has been responsible for the methodology, data collection, and management of this project. These individuals are listed in Appendix A of the MLS report entitled "The Maryland Longitudinal Study—A Descriptive Overview: The Study's Purpose, Goals, Features, Participants, and Design."

I. INTRODUCTION

Maryland Longitudinal Student Research Report #3, entitled **"The freshman experience at UMCP: Comparing commuter and residents students"** (1987),[1] was designed to serve as a baseline for subsequent longitudinal comparisons of commuter and resident students. The current report uses this baseline data as a point of departure from which to examine several questions of a longitudinal nature related to the commuter students' experience at College Park.

Even though the data analyzed in the 1987 report were collected in the students' first year, after they had spent only several months at UMCP, some significant differences among residence groups were found. Dependent commuters, defined as students living at home with parent(s) or other relatives, were significantly less involved in key aspects of campus life (e.g., on-campus jobs, student organizations, and relationships with persons affiliated with UMCP) than resident students, defined as those who lived in campus residence halls. These early differences are especially significant in light of the fact that commuter and resident students arrived at UMCP with similar aptitudes (as reflected by their SAT scores) and with similar expectations for academic success. Commuter and resident students also began their college experience with equal degrees of identification with UMCP and had basically equal levels of satisfaction with their first few months of college. For further description of the contrasting freshman year experience of commuter and resident students, see **MLS Research Report #3.**

In the earlier report, it was noted that the literature on college students nationwide has focused on the effects of place of residence in relation to the quality of the collegiate experience and students' likelihood of persistence to graduation. Commuting to college has been associated with a lack of commitment to college (Astin, 1985; Beal and Noel, 1980; Schuchman, 1974; Velez, 1985), lower satisfaction with college, and less involvement in campus activities (Astin, 1975; Chickering, 1974; Harrington, 1972). Commuters are also generally characterized as working more hours than residents, often in off-campus jobs, and as having lower academic expectations. These characteristics are of special interest because of their probable relevance to retention (Astin; Velez). A 1985 national study by Velez found that students living on campus were 43% more likely to graduate than those living off campus.

MLS Research Report #3 on the commuter freshman year experience indicated some similarities and some differences between UMCP students and those studied nationally. One of the purposes of this report is to assess whether analysis of data collected from MLS participants after their freshman year would reveal further similarities and/or differences with the national trends.

This report addresses five questions:

1. **Is there a relationship between residence status (on or off-campus) during the freshman year, and subsequent enrollment status?** To answer this question, students who either lived in a residence hall or lived at home their freshman year were categorized as resident or dependent commuter, and differences between these two categories were examined in terms of their subsequent enrollment at UMCP.

   In addition, the graduation rates from UMCP for each category were also examined. The results are discussed in Results Section A.

2. **To what degree does residence category in Year 3 reflect residence category in Year 1 among UMCP persisters. (In other words, how stable is residence status across time?)** To answer this question, the first year residence status of UMCP persisters who either a) lived in a residence hall or b) lived at home their third year were examined. The results are discussed in Results Section B.
3. **Was place of residence in the *freshman year* associated with differences in students' responses in their junior year?** To answer this question, students were categorized as resident or dependent commuter, based on their place of residence in the freshman year, and differences between these two groups were examined in terms of responses given in the junior year.
4. **Was place of residence in the *junior year* associated with differences in students' responses in their junior year?** To answer this question, students were categorized as either resident or dependent commuter, based on their place of residence in the junior year, and differences between them were examined in terms of responses in the junior year.[2] The responses to questions 3 and 4 are discussed in Results Section C.
5. **Looking only at students who remained in the same residence category in Years 1 and 3 (either commuters or on-campus residents), did their responses change from the freshman to the junior year, and if so, did the changes differ between the two residence categories?** This question was examined by computing the difference between students' responses in the freshman and in the junior year, and using these difference scores as dependent variables. This was accomplished through the use of a multivariate repeated measures analysis of variance technique for all continuous variables. This type of analysis was not done for dependent variables which were categorical. The results of these analyses will be discussed in Results Section D.

II. DESCRIPTION OF PARTICIPANTS

For this report, MLS participants were categorized by both freshman and junior year place of residence. In each year, place of residence was defined as follows: **residents,** students living in the residence halls, and **dependent commuters,** students living at home with parent(s) or other relatives. Students in other living arrangements (e.g., apartments, private rooms, student houses, and fraternity/sorority houses), who were termed independent commuters in the previous report, were not included because of their small numbers in the freshman year. Students who failed to indicate their residence status in both years were excluded from all analyses. For the purpose of conciseness, dependent commuters will be referred to as commuters throughout this report.

A complete description of the Maryland Longitudinal Study can be found in **MLS Research Report #1: A Descriptive Overview.**[3] The MLS Representative Group is based on a random sample of freshmen selected from the entering class of Fall, 1980. This sample is a cross section of the larger freshman class and, as such, contains a representative group of minorities — including approximately 10% black students. Consequently, it is important to keep in mind that the Representative Group is not a "white" sample, but instead reflects the ethnic diversity at UMCP.

Because of the Division of Student Affairs' strong interest in the collegiate experience of black students on campus and the relatively small number of blacks in the freshman class of 1980-81, all black freshmen not included in the Representative Group were also invited to participate in MLS. Those black students who agreed to participate became members of the "Black Group."

For purposes of analysis, the Black Group (consisting of all the black freshmen not already selected as part of the Representative Group as well as the blacks in the Representative Group) comprises the black individuals studied in this report. Using data from the black students in the Representative Group and adding them into the Black Group was done for two reasons. First, as large a group as possible was desirable because of the relatively small numbers of black students in the original freshman class, and attrition over the years of the longitudinal study would reduce the number of study participants. Second, the intention in the selection of the Black Group was the testing of the total available (and willing) population, rather than of a specified "sample" as was the case with the Representative Group. Consequently, for purposes of analysis, the black students in the Representative Group do "double duty" in these analyses by being members of both the Black Group and members of the Representative Group.

III. RESULTS

A. QUESTION 1: UMCP RE-ENROLLMENT RATES IN YEARS 2-4, AND UMCP GRADUATION RATES, BY FRESHMAN YEAR RESIDENCE

To see if there were significant differences in subsequent re-enrollment rates at UMCP between students who lived on campus their freshman year and those who commuted from home, enrollment status in Years 2-4 was obtained from University records and was examined for the two residence categories.

With one exception (the Representative Group, Spring semester, Year 2) there were no statistically significant differences in the re-enrollment rates of residents and commuters in either the Representative Group or the Black Group, although the rates for residents were higher than for commuters each semester (see Table 1).

Likewise, there were no *significant* differences between students in the two residence categories on graduation rates within five years of matriculation from UMCP. However, the graduation rates of residents tended to be slightly higher than the graduation rates of commuters.

TABLE 1
UMCP RE-ENROLLMENT RATES AND GRADUATE RATES BY FRESHMAN YEAR RESIDENCE (IN PERCENTS)

	Representative Group		Black Group	
	Resident	Commuter	Resident	Commuter
Year 2				
Fall	86	80	71	64
Spring	82	73*	65	54
Year 3				
Fall	69	66	57	49
Spring	68	64	53	45
Year 4				
Fall	67	62	50	44
Spring	64	63	50	39
Graduated	52	44	32	26

*p < .05

B. QUESTION 2: DEGREE TO WHICH RESIDENCE CATEGORY IN YEAR 3 REFLECTS RESIDENCE CATEGORY IN YEAR 1, AMONG UMCP PERSISTERS

REPRESENTATIVE GROUP — Of those who were campus residents in Year 3, 84% also lived in a residence hall in Year 1; 12% had lived with their parents, 4% had lived in other settings.

Of those who lived with their parents in Year 3, 86% were also living there in Year 1; 12% had been in a residence hall their first year, 1% were living in another setting.

BLACK GROUP — Ninety percent of UMCP persisters living in the residence hall in Year 3 were residence hall residents in Year 1 as well; 9% had lived with their parents, and 1% in another setting.

Sixty-seven percent of those living with their parents in Year 3 were living with them in Year 1; 30% had been residence hall residents their first year; and 3% had lived in another setting.

Based on these data, residence seems to be a more stable category in the Representative Group than for the Black Group. Just under one-third of the Black Group dependent commuters in Year 3 were residence hall residents in Year 1.

C. QUESTIONS 3 & 4: DIFFERENCES AMONG RESIDENT AND COMMUTER STUDENTS BASED ON RESPONSES IN THEIR THIRD YEAR AT UMCP

In this section, students' responses to MLS surveys, questionnaires and academic progress in 1983 are compared by their residence status (commuter or campus residents) in both 1981 and 1983. This set of analyses will show: (1) whether students who were commuters in their freshman year responded differently to the MLS items in their junior year compared to students who were campus residents in the freshman year, and (2) whether students who were commuters in their junior year (regardless of their residence as freshmen) responded differently than junior resident students to items asked during that year. All analyses in this section use students' responses in 1983 as the dependent variables.

Academic Variables

UMCP persisters who lived at home or who commuted were compared in terms of their cumulative grade-point averages (GPA) at the end of the Spring semester of their third year (1983), the average number of credits taken per semester, the cumulative number of credits taken through the Spring 1983 semester, and the number of hours they reported studying. In the Representative Group, significant differences among students by residence category were noted only in terms of the average number of credits earned per semester in their junior year. Students who lived in the residence halls during their junior year averaged 14 credits per semester, as compared to an average of 12.2 credits for students who lived at home during this year. In the Black Group, there were no significant differences between commuters or residents in terms of the academic variables analyzed in the junior year.

In terms of the educational aspirations of the students themselves, no differences between commuters and residents were found in either the Black or Representative Group, in terms of their responses in 1983. Approximately equal proportions of students who lived in the residence halls and at home in both the freshman and junior years expected to receive bachelors, masters, and doctoral or professional degrees.

Students were asked a number of questions related to the various types of honors they had received at UMCP in 1983. These included items relating to whether the students had been accepted in a general or departmental honors program, selected as an undergraduate teaching assistant, or placed on the dean's list. Other questions related to such things as whether the students had had something published or patented, had been elected to a leadership position, or had participated in an artistic performance. There were no differences related to either freshman or junior year residence status on any of these variables.

Employment Patterns

Students in the different residence categories were compared in terms of the number of hours they worked per week. In the Representative Group, students living in the residence halls during their freshman and junior years worked significantly fewer hours than commuter students. Indeed, more than twice as many freshmen who lived in campus residence halls (76%) reported not working at all compared to their commuting counterparts (34%). As juniors, the percentages changed only slightly: 69% of those who reported not working at all lived in the residence halls compared to 31% of commuters. This finding did not hold for students in the Black Group. In the Black Group, the percentages of students by residence category who did not work were similar to the Representative Group in the freshman and junior years. In terms of those who worked, commuters were likely to work longer hours than campus residents in both the freshman and junior years.

Personal Development

Commuters and residents were compared in terms of their development from the freshman to junior years in several areas. These areas included their frequency of association with students of another race, academic development, commitment to learning, personal development, humanism/altruism, cultural and aesthetic awareness, vocational preparation, and correct written expression. The only differences among the commuters and residents in these areas occurred in the Representative Group. Using a five-point scale, (1 = no gain, 2 = little gain, 3 = some gain, 4 = much gain, 5 = very much gain), students in the Representative Group who were residents during their freshman year reported significantly higher levels of personal development (M = 4.0) and significantly more time spent with those of another race (M = 3.2) than did students living at home during the freshman year (M = 3.7 and 2.7, respectively). When students were classified in terms of their residence in the junior year, resident students again reported more personal development than did students living at home (M = 4.0 as opposed to 3.6). The difference between the residence groups in terms of time spent with students of another race did not persist into the junior year. Commuters and residents in the Black Group were not significantly different on any of the variables related to development in either their freshman or junior years.

Relationships with Faculty and Staff

Students participating in the MLS were asked in their junior year to respond to several questions relating to the amount of time spent in contact with faculty members; the amount of support or encouragement received from faculty members, staff, and advisors; the degree of closeness with one's academic advisor; the degree of involvement in interpersonal relationships with faculty members; and the number of faculty members known personally by the student. Students were also asked whether they had gotten to know a faculty member during the past twelve months and, if so, how this occurred. If they had not, they were asked what prevented the development of a relationship.

In the Representative Group, there was a significant difference reported between commuters and residents regarding the degree of involvement with faculty members. On a scale where 1 = not at all involved and 5 = very much involved, students living in the residence halls in 1983 were significantly more involved with faculty and staff (M = 2.3) than were commuters (M = 1.9). No other significant differences pertaining to faculty relationships were found.

In the Black Group, students who were residents during their freshman year reported knowing significantly more faculty and staff members in their junior year than did students who were commuters during the freshman year. Students who were residents in the junior year also reported higher levels of involvement with faculty members in their junior year (M = 2.3 as opposed to 1.9 for commuters). This is in contrast to the findings of **MLS Research Report #3** in which no differences were reported between Black Group commuters and residents in the levels of involvement with faculty members during their freshman year.

There were no differences by residence in either the Representative or Black Groups in the reasons students identified for knowing or not knowing UMCP faculty and staff. It is interesting to note, however, that the majority of students in both Groups attributed their failure to meet any faculty members either to class-related factors (e.g., large class size) or to their own lack of initiative. Less than 5% of the students in either Group cited factors relating to the faculty members themselves (e.g., lack of interest or unavailability).

Peer Support

Although students in the Representative Group showed little difference by residence status on the amount of support received from faculty, staff or advisors, significant differences were reported in terms of support received from fellow students. On a 1 to 5 scale ranging from almost none to very much, students who lived in the residence halls during their freshman year reported a significantly higher degree of support from other students (M = 3.9) than did students who lived at home as freshman (M = 3.6), and were also more likely to agree that they had enough primary as well as casual relationships at UMCP. There were no differences by residence status in the amount of support students received from their friends. These findings are identical to those discussed in **MLS Research Report #3.**

These differences did not persist when students were compared in terms of their residence status in their junior year. When commuters and residents in the Representative Group were examined during the junior year, no significant differences were observed on any of the variables relating to peer support. This lack of significance may have been caused by the smaller sample size used in the junior year analyses, as the actual

differences in means between the two groups were as large or larger than those found between residence categories in 1983.

In the Black Group, no significant differences by either freshman or junior year residence status were observed in level of support received from friends or fellow students, or in the numbers of primary or casual relationships the students had at UMCP. These findings are consistent with **MLS Research Report #3** in which participants answered these questions as freshmen.

Involvement

One area of consistent difference between resident and commuter students is that of involvement in on-campus activities (Chickering, 1974; Foster, Sedlacek, and Hardwick, 1975; Astin, 1975). This finding is of particular interest because several studies (Astin, 1985; Beal and Noel, 1980; Velez, 1985) have argued that on-campus involvement is positively related to retention.

Students participating in the MLS were asked several questions relating to their overall level of involvement and their involvement in specific on-campus activities, such as formal academic experiences, interpersonal relationships with students, work experiences, and student organizations. In both the Representative and Black Groups, significant differences were observed by residence status in both the freshman and junior years.

In the Representative Group, students who were residents during the freshman year reported significantly more involvement in interpersonal relationships with students and student organizations, and significantly more overall involvement, than did students who were commuters during the freshman year. These differences persist when students were classified by their residence in their junior year.

Students in the Black Group showed somewhat different results on the involvement variables. Black students who lived at home during their freshman year reported a significantly lower level of involvement in student organizations and in interpersonal relationships with faculty members during the junior year than did black students living in the residence halls as freshmen. When students in the Black Group were grouped in terms of their residence status in the junior year, however, there were no significant differences between residents and commuters on any of these variables. This lack of significance may have been caused by the smaller number of students who responded to this item in the third year.

Institutional Identification

Some studies indicate that commuter students are less committed to college (Beal and Noel, 1980) and expect to identify to a lesser extent with their college as alumni (Harrington, 1972) than do resident students. Differences between commuter and resident students were investigated in the current study by comparing the responses of the two groups to the following questions: 1) To what extent would you describe yourself as positive feelings about being a student here at UMCP? 2) How identified with UMCP do you expect to be in the future? and 3) Based on my experience since entering UMCP, I would choose it again.

No significant differences were found between commuters and residents in either the freshman or junior years on any of these items. These findings held for both the Representative and Black Groups and parallel those cited in **MLS Research Report #3** which reported the freshman responses to these same questions.

D. QUESTION 5: CHANGES OVER TIME

This section examines the question of whether commuters and campus residents exhibited different degrees of change from their freshman to junior years with respect to the variables considered in this report. In other words, did students who lived on campus both years change more over time than students who were commuters both years?

On the whole, this set of analyses indicates that students (regardless of place of residence) changed significantly over the period of time from freshman to junior year on the majority of questions. These findings were extremely consistent across the Representative and Black Groups. There were very few variables where one residence category showed a greater amount of change than the other. In other words, although commuters and residents may have started out at different points as freshmen, they developed at the same rate in most cases. These analyses will be discussed separately by subject area in the remainder of this section.

Personal Development

Students were questioned in their freshman year and again in their junior year concerning the amount they had accomplished in the areas of frequency of association with those of another race, academic development, commitment to learning, personal development, humanism/altruism, cultural/aesthetic awareness, vocational preparation, and correct written expression. Also included were the number of hours per week spent studying and the number of hours spent working. In both the Representative and Black Groups, all but one student's answers in 1983 on all but one of these variables were significantly different from their answers in 1981, regardless of place of residence. Students on the average report significant gains in their development on all eight of the personal development variables.

In the Representative Group, there were also significant differences in the amount of gain shown on three of these variables. Students who lived at home showed significantly greater gains in the amount of hours spent studying than did those living in the residence halls. However, students who lived in the residence halls showed greater gains in their degrees of both commitment to learning and humanism/altruism than did students who lived at home. These differences in the amount of gain were not found for the Black Group.

Relationships with Faculty and Staff

The second area of interest concerned students' relationships with faculty and staff members. In both 1981 and 1983, students were asked: how much time they had spent with a faculty member; how much support or encouragement they had received from faculty, staff, and advisors; how many faculty, staff, and teaching assistants (TA's) they knew personally; how many faculty members knew them well enough to write a useful letter of recommendation for them; and how close they felt to their academic advisor.

The results of analyses in this area revealed that students in both the Representative and Black Groups changed significantly from the first to the third year in terms of time spent in contact with faculty members; amount of support received from faculty, staff members, and advisors; degree of closeness with their advisors; and in the number of faculty who would be

able to write a useful letter of recommendation for them. In general, students felt they had "some" contact with faculty members, "moderate" support and closeness, and knew at least one faculty member who could write a useful letter of recommendation. There were no differences between residence categories in their 1981 responses to these items or in the amount of change.

Students did not change significantly over the two-year period in their responses to questions concerning the number of faculty, staff, or TA's they knew personally. These findings were true for both the Representative and Black Groups, again, regardless of residence status.

Peer Support

Analyses were conducted regarding change over time on questions concerning the degree of support students received from friends and fellow students, as well as the number of primary relationships and casual acquaintances that the students had at UMCP. In both the Representative and Black Groups, students showed significant amounts of change in the number of casual acquaintances they had at UMCP and the amount of support received from friends. In the Black Group, students also changed significantly from 1981 to 1983 in terms of the amount of support received from other students. Changes on these three variables were all positive, with students reporting significantly more support from friends and fellow students and significantly more casual acquaintances at UMCP in 1983 than in 1981. There were no differences between commuters and residents in the amount of gain for any of the three variables.

Involvement

As indicated in **RESULTS SECTION C,** significant differences have consistently been found between commuter and resident students in their degree of involvement in campus activities.

Students were asked in 1981 and again in 1983 how much they had become involved in: formal academic experiences, interpersonal relationships with other students and with faculty members, work experiences, and student organizations. They were also asked their degree of overall involvement.

In the Representative Group, students, regardless of residence status, showed significant *gains* over the two years in their levels of involvement in all of the areas noted above except that of interpersonal relationships with other students. There was, however, a significant difference noted between students who were commuters and those who had lived in residence halls on the degree of change reported in involvement in both work experiences and interpersonal relationships with other students.

Students who lived in the residence halls showed virtually no change from 1981 to 1983 in their degree of involvement with other students, while those living at home reported an increase in involvement with other students over this period. However, as noted above, resident students had a higher initial level of involvement with other students (M = 3.7) than did commuters (M = 3.1); the scale used ranged from 1 = not at all involved to 5 = very much involved.

In terms of work experiences, while both residence groups became more involved over the two-year period, the gain of resident students in this area was significantly greater than that of commuter students (M = 1.47 as opposed to .58). The effect of this differential amount of change was that commuter and resident students reported equal levels of involvement in their work experiences by 1983 (since resident students had a lower initial level of involvement in work experiences as freshmen).

In the Black Group, these differences between the residence categories were not evident. In terms of overall change, however, the responses of the Black Group were very similar to those of the Representative Group. The only difference noted was that Black Group students showed no significant gain in involvement with academic experiences, as reported by students in the Representative Group.

To summarize the findings related to the six involvement items, students in both the Representative and Black Groups, regardless of residence status, showed significant gains from freshman to junior year in their involvement in interpersonal relationships with faculty, work experiences, student organization experiences, and in their overall involvement. In the Representative Group, students also reported more involvement in formal academic experiences. Students in this group who were residents showed virtually no gain in their involvement in interpersonal relationships with other students, while students who commuted reported a significant gain. However, it should be noted that students living in the residence halls had a higher initial level of involvement in this area, so that the 1983 levels for these two groups are much closer to one another than the 1981 levels. Resident students reported a significantly greater gain in work experiences than did the commuters. Since the resident students had a lower initial level of involvement in this area, the 1983 levels for the two groups were equal.

Institutional Identification

In contrast to the findings in the areas described above, students, regardless of resident status, showed no change on any of the variables related to institutional identification. Students were asked in 1981, and again in 1983, the extent to which they would describe themselves as having positive feelings about being a student at UMCP, how identified they expected to be with UMCP as alumni, and whether they would choose UMCP again. No significant changes in students' responses for the two years were noted for either the Representative or Black Groups, nor were there any significant differences between residence categories in the amount of change on these variables.

V. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Before drawing implications, it is useful to summarize the findings of this report.

Differences by Freshman and Junior Year Place of Residence

Although not generally statistically significant, more students who started at UMCP as residents were still enrolled two years later than students who lived at home as freshmen. These findings are congruent with those of several national studies (Chickering, 1974; Astin, 1975; Tinto, 1987; Velez, 1985).

When commuters and residents were compared in terms of cumulative GPAs, number of credits accumulated, and number of hours spent studying, no differences were found. Likewise, there were no differences in the students' educational aspirations or in the academic or leadership honors students had achieved at UMCP. Further, no differences were found on any of the items related to identification with or positive feelings about UMCP. These findings are not congruent with major national studies.

Consistent with the earlier MLS report on the students' freshman experience at UMCP, commuter stu-

dents work significantly more hours than their resident counterparts. And, again like the freshman report, commuters were found to be far more likely to work off-campus rather than on-campus. Perhaps as a result of their greater number of work hours, commuters average significantly fewer credit hours per semester than residents.

In terms of personal development, resident students in the Representative Group reported significantly higher levels than students who lived at home as freshman and as juniors. Students who lived in the residence halls in the third year were significantly more involved with faculty and staff. In the Representative Group, students who lived in the residence halls during their freshman year reported a higher degree of support from other students and were also more likely to agree that they had enough primary as well as casual relationships at UMCP.

As indicated earlier, differences between resident and commuter students have consistently been found in level of involvement in on-campus activities (Chickering, 1974; Foster, Sedlacek, and Hardwick, 1976; Astin, 1975). This is of particular interest because several studies (Astin, 1985; Velez, 1985; Beal and Noel, 1980) have indicated a positive relationship between on-campus involvement and retention.

Students in the Representative Group who were campus residents during the freshman year reported significantly more involvement in interpersonal relationships with students and student organizations, and significantly more overall involvement, than did students who were commuters during the freshman year. Black Group students who lived at home during their freshman year reported a significantly lower level of involvement in student organizations and in interpersonal relationships with faculty members during the junior year than did black students living in the residence halls as freshmen.

Changes over Time

On the whole, students (regardless of residence status) showed a significant amount of change over the two-year period on the majority of questions studied in this report. These findings were extremely consistent across the Representative and Black Groups. Indeed, there were very few variables on which one residence category showed a greater amount of change than another. In other words, students in both residence groups changed at the same rate in most cases. However, since resident students and commuters generally started out at different points, the initial relative differences between commuter and resident students persisted.

The area of involvement was one in which commuter and resident students showed significant differences in their amount of change over time. Students who lived at home reported a significant gain in involvement in interpersonal relationships with fellow students. Although students who were residents reported no gain on this variable, it is important to note that their initial level of involvement was much higher than that of freshman commuters. Residence students reported a significantly greater gain in involvement in work experiences than commuters; however, this resulted in similar 1983 levels of involvement in work since commuters had been significantly more involved in work their freshman year than residents.

Finally, students in the Representative Group who lived at home reported significantly greater gains than did commuters in the number of hours spent studying, and significantly less change in levels of both commitment to learning and humanism/altruism. These differences were not found in the Black Group.

Conclusion

What are the implications of these findings for UMCP staff and faculty? The earlier MLS report indicated that commuter and resident students arrive at UMCP with similar aptitudes (as reflected by their SAT scores) and with similar expectations for academic success. They begin their college experience with equal degrees of identification with the institution they have selected and with basically equal levels of satisfaction with college. However, as early as the second semester of their freshman year, commuters are significantly less involved in key aspects of campus life, such as on-campus jobs, student organizations, and relationships with persons affiliated with UMCP.

The present report shows that these differences persist into the junior year, although no significant differences were found between junior commuters and residents in GPA, number of credits accumulated, academic aspirations, or honors received. Commuters continue to work more hours than residents and to work off campus in significantly greater proportions.

The findings of this report in terms of retention are generally consistent with those of the national studies cited earlier. The relationship of *involvement in campus life, working on campus* (rather than off), and the *degree of interaction with other members of the institutional community* are critical elements in student persistence (Tinto, 1987; Astin, 1985). It has become clear that this campus must take action to increase the quantity and quality of commuter students' involvement in these three key areas of the college experience.

Some potential actions include:

1. Educate commuter students early (i.e., at orientation) and frequently (i.e., with newsletters) about the importance of on-campus involvement.
2. Educate faculty and staff about the relationship of on-campus involvement and employment to the retention and satisfaction of commuter students.
3. Increase the number of on-campus student employment opportunities and make these opportunities known to commuters.
4. Continue to develop programs in which undergraduate students could interact with faculty members and work with them as research and teaching assistants.
5. Continue the development and support of programs that promote early interaction with on-campus peers, and faculty and staff, such as the S.H.O.W. Big Brother-Big Sister program, the ROPES minority student orientation program, Discover UMCP, and First Look Fair.
6. Improve delivery of information to commuter students about opportunities for on-campus involvement and employment (i.e., through student and parent orientation, by direct mail to students' homes, publicity in *The Diamondback).*
7. Make special efforts and reach out to involve commuter students in major campus events such as Homecoming.
8. Increase the number and variety of *daytime* social, cultural and recreational programs so that commuters may participate without making a second trip to campus in the evening.

In conclusion, as higher education becomes more and more expensive, many students may find the option to live on campus *and* pay tuition to be out of their reach. While the present report supports the positive "impact of college" on most areas of development for the resident students and the commuters who manage to persist, it also highlights the need to attend to commuting students early in their college experience, in order to enhance the likelihood of their achieving their educational goals.

END NOTES

1. To obtain a copy of MLS Research Report #3: The freshman experience at UMCP: Comparing commuter and resident students, write: Maryland Longitudinal Study, The University of Maryland at College Park, 2108 Mitchell Building, College Park, MD 20742.

2. Basically, then, the two analyses described for questions 3 and 4 were designed to determine whether residence status in either the freshman or the junior year was associated with differences in responses given in the junior year. The results of these two analyses will be discussed together in Results Section C. It is important to note that the dependent variables in both of these analyses are students' responses in the junior year. For these analyses, two-way multivariate analysis of variance techniques were used in all situations in which the dependent variable was continuous. Chi square tests were used in situations in which the dependent variables were categorical.

3. A copy of this introductory MLS report can be obtained from the above address.

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